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Official Records

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Wednesday, 18 September 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jan Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Acting President *(spoke in Arabic)*: The General Assembly will now hear a statement made by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Honourable Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minster of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Wickremesinghe (Sri Lanka): Let me begin by conveying, on behalf of the Sri Lanka delegation, our sincere felicitations to Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as President of this fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly and our assurances of our fullest cooperation.

I would also like to express appreciation for the exemplary manner in which Mr. Han Seung-soo, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, guided the work of the fifty-sixth session. We also warmly welcome Switzerland as a new Member of the Organization, and look forward also to welcoming East Timor.

Our discussions and debates in this Assembly often reach great heights and seek grand objectives, but ultimately they are about the future lives, well-being and security of the people we are privileged to represent. It is with such thoughts in my mind that I recall the horrendous events of 11 September 2001, which claimed the lives of so many Americans and people of other nationalities from all over the world. As we are only too painfully aware, they are not the only victims of terror.

The attack confirmed what we in Sri Lanka have long known: terrorism has long been globalized. As President Bush acknowledged on 11 March 2002, "September 11 was not the beginning of global terror, but it was the beginning of the world's concerted response."

We in Sri Lanka perhaps know better than most the tragedies that conflict and terrorism create. My own country has been ravaged by a 20-year conflict, which has caused more than 65,000 deaths. Eight hundred thousand people are internally displaced. Tragic stories abound: children who will never see their fathers return home; mothers who have lost their sons; and children who, even today, innocently step on anti-personnel

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mines. I have talked to the disabled soldiers and the dispossessed, the people who have no homes, and those who return to the north-east of our country to find war-torn ruins and once productive fields sown with land mines.

The election victory last December of the Government I represent was a clear national mandate to end the conflict in the north-east. The Government has since moved swiftly towards the fulfilment of that mandate. A ceasefire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was signed on 22 February this year. The ceasefire has held.

Confidence-building measures have encouraged the free movement of people throughout the country and have revived economic activity. Peace talks with the LTTE, facilitated by Norway, began two days ago in Sattahip, Thailand. The Sri Lanka Government has unilaterally suspended the proscription of the LTTE in order to facilitate the talks, to give peace a chance, and to give the LTTE a chance for peace.

A flexible approach is necessary in the negotiations, combining a warm heart with a cool head. An understanding of the other side, their aspirations and their concerns, is essential. Negotiations are complex and will take time. In the early stages of our talks with the LTTE, we are trying to resolve some of the immediate practical needs of the people in order to bring relief and normalcy to our society. Economic reconstruction and development of the affected areas will be a deciding factor in sustaining the momentum of political negotiations. Development is part of the healing process in a wounded, divided society. The pressing day-to-day problems of the people need to be settled as soon as possible.

Indeed, at the discussions in Thailand, there was strong endorsement of the urgent need for resources to ensure the early dividends of the peace process. The role played by Norway in facilitating that process and, most recently, at the peace talks is deeply appreciated. I extend my sincere thanks to Norway for all its efforts.

Already, following the ceasefire, there are signs of people enjoying their rediscovered freedom. The people want more. Exchange visits between school children and other groups from the south and from the north have revealed to many that the other side is not so different after all. Last week our capital, Colombo, came to a standstill as people from all over the country, from every religion and every ethnic group in society, flocked to a peace rally.

Those are all encouraging signs. But with them comes a risk. The imperative of peace is growing. The people demand peace, and the politicians and negotiators on both sides had better deliver. Peace is people-driven. The conflict had dragged our economy to near bankruptcy, and last year, for the first time in independent Sri Lanka, we recorded negative growth. Resources must flow into developing the areas ravaged by war. Opportunities must be created. The momentum of growth must be re-established. The people want to see normalcy restored, not tomorrow but today. The farmers want their damaged irrigation canals repaired today; their harvest cannot be delayed until a final agreement is reached. This imperative is driven even more by young people among the Sri Lankan armed forces and the cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, whose weapons lie silent. Without international support and help with resources to build a peace dividend, the gloss on peace can be dulled. With the recreation of opportunities for people and for growth, politicians and negotiators will be driven even harder to stabilize, advance and sustain the peace.

From there, we can approach the complex constitutional issues. Those questions will take time. We believe that the way forward is through a clearly representative interim administration within a united Sri Lanka in which the rights of all communities, Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese, are safeguarded. That will allow us to carry forward an initiative to empower local people by decentralizing governmental authority and by establishing five regional economic development zones. Through such initiatives, we intend to encourage local people to be responsible for driving economic growth in their own regions. Those measures, along with the liberalization and deregulation of our economy, will generate wealth.

Meanwhile, there is a pressing, immediate security issue. Hundreds of thousands of mines need to be removed from tracts of land to make them safe and arable in order for the internally displaced persons to return to their homes and their farms. Sri Lanka is reviewing its position on the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines with a view to becoming a party to it as confidence in peace grows. We are grateful for the help we are receiving from the United Nations, members of the international community and non-

governmental organizations in our demining programme.

My Government is resolved to ensure that the people of the north and east of our Republic should also enjoy the same security and the same quality of life, democratic governance and human rights which people in other parts of the country enjoy. Sri Lanka has a high rating on the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Our per capita income figures and our life expectancy and our literacy rates are among the highest in the region. Peace will further enhance all that, but its dividend must be credited to all the shareholders in Sri Lanka's future.

Sri Lanka welcomes the support that our peace process has received from members of the international community and from the United Nations. On a request made by me to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a United Nations inter-agency needs assessment team visited Sri Lanka in April and May of this year. The team completed a strategic overview of the current situation, which can guide immediate and mid- to long-term action by United Nations agencies in Sri Lanka. We thank the Secretary-General for his efforts.

Quickening the pace of peace and having its dividends credited directly and urgently to the people are imperative. We are grateful to all those who are assisting us in Quick Impact Projects. The implementation of those projects without delay will help peace take root, involve people in the affected areas in their economic and social recovery and ease the way for higher stages of development.

Throughout its long history, there have been flattering descriptions of Sri Lanka — centuries before our Tourist Board promoted the serenity of the island. The ancient Arabs and mediaeval Europeans called our island paradise. If in the course of our recent conflict some of the quality of paradise has been lost, then surely paradise must be regained. Regaining Sri Lanka is much more than a slogan, it is a practical, doable strategy, in which we invite the international community to participate.

While seeking a negotiated solution to our own conflict, Sri Lanka strongly supports negotiating a settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. We have long supported a responsible peace process which would lead to the acceptance of two States, Israel and Palestine, prospering in conditions of peace and security, as neighbours, within secure and recognized borders. We urge the resumption of a serious dialogue between Israel and Palestine as a prelude to sustained negotiations.

In Sri Lanka, dialogue and negotiations are turning around a long, drawn-out conflict. With respect to those who were responsible for 11 September, the approach needs to be different. No cause justifies the killing of innocent people. Global terrorism must be eradicated, whatever its manifestation and wherever it occurs. We support a comprehensive approach to international terrorism through the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism. Terrorism has affected virtually all the countries of South Asia. A meeting in Sri Lanka will soon draft an additional protocol to the Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. The protocol would update the Convention, inter alia to meet the obligations devolving on member States in respect of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

The United Nations has been a source of good since its inception. It is the forum in which there is an opportunity for interaction and possible reconciliation among complex, competing and even confrontational concerns. Under the Secretary-General's initiative of the Global Compact, it provides for the launching and navigation of positive partnerships between the corporate and State sectors.

We also look forward to the implementation of decisions taken at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey. We welcome the Millennium Challenge Account as an outcome of that Conference to assist countries committed to democratic norms and good governance, to the engagement of the private sector and to the involvement of the people in the process of development.

In Sri Lanka, we intend to re-establish an investment-friendly country with an efficient bureaucracy and a thriving private sector. On this visit to the United States, I have brought a team from my industrial sector to talk to United States businessmen. We are grateful to the United Nations for helping my Government to organize an investment promotion forum in the United States tomorrow with the

participation of members of our private sector, who will interact with their counterparts here. Those "close encounters of the business kind" will provide insight into the opportunities for collaborative economic and development ventures in Sri Lanka as we move forward on the peace front. Investment in peace makes sound political and economic sense for both Sri Lanka and its partners abroad. Growth in Sri Lanka will be good for everyone.

Across Sri Lanka, the people continue to build the only true peace we can hope for. Without fanfare, without politicians or media, they are quietly going about their business, finding old friends and building new relationships. Mistrust and suspicion are slowly melting away as people talk and share past experiences. The hatred in some hearts will take a little longer to dispel. But even that will be overcome in time by the deep desire for weapons to be destroyed, mines to be cleared and the sound of laughter to be heard once again.

Trusting the people, whether it be for the consolidation of peace or the pursuit of development, is the best policy. We are beholden to the people we work for, whether they be clients or customers or shareholders or voters.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka for the statement he just made.

The Honourable Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President *(spoke in Arabic)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. M. Morshed Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Mr. Khan (Bangladesh): May I begin by extending my warm congratulations to the President upon his election. We have every confidence that his stewardship of our proceedings will yield fruitful results. Credit is due also to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his deft handling of our affairs. We also congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the leadership he has shown during the past year across a very broad range of subjects. His inaugural remarks, which have set the tone for our deliberations, are truly praiseworthy. We welcome two new Members this year, Switzerland and, soon, East Timor. We look forward to working closely with them.

As we are all painfully aware, this has been a very difficult year. The day of 11 September 2001 witnessed a dastardly act of barbaric terrorism. It also united peace-loving peoples all over the world as never before. As we continue our struggle to prevent the resurgence of such atrocities, we must also address ourselves seriously to the task of rooting out the causes that spawn such behaviour. Any action in that respect should be based on the widest possible international consensus-building through consultations.

Bangladesh has been and shall always be a committed and active partner in the coalition against terrorism. We have taken every necessary step to share information and assist in the curbing of terror. We have sought to implement Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which we ourselves helped to draft and adopt last year as a member of the Council. At the regional level, we are currently examining ways and means of further strengthening the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. Terror is totally unconnected to any faith or region. It is a global phenomenon that needs to be tackled by means that are both legitimate and consensual.

Those methods include the promotion of democracy and democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, peace-building, cooperation towards equitable economic development, the eradication of poverty, gender equality, measures aimed at confidence-building, mutual respect among races and peoples, and harmony — not clashes — between cultures. Those are the main pillars on which we must build a world where hope will reign in place of despair. In the construction of this edifice, the architect must be the United Nations — which, with its Charter principles and purposes — is the greatest institution crafted by humankind.

Bangladesh is relentless in the pursuit of those goals, both nationally and internationally. Our problems, as all are aware, are many and varied. Of roughly the size of the state of Wisconsin in the United States, we have a population of 130 million people, which makes us one of the largest nations in the world. Centuries of colonial exploitation left us with inadequate infrastructure and resources, and

constrained us in the trap of poverty. Subject to the vagaries of nature, our economy was a gamble in monsoons. Soon after our independence, in 1971, we were perceived as an irredeemable basket case.

Since then, we have come a long way. We have dedicated ourselves wholeheartedly to improving the quality of life of our people and to their development. Our policies were grounded in certain values dear to our hearts. We have acted in the firm belief that development is possible only against a matrix of democracy, human rights and the rule of law; that structures and institutions in society must be inclusive, participatory and accountable; and that growth must be pro-poor, pro-environment, pro-equity and pro-women. In our view, tolerance among religions and an appreciation of differing opinions must be imbedded in the social psyche. Our rich intellectual heritage and cultural tradition have been the source of home-grown innovative ideas such as micro-credit and special educational projects that have enabled us to initiate the quiet revolution in our society that has led to a process of huge societal transformation.

As a result, we have been able to achieve many successes, which have been widely acclaimed. Despite our being a traditional society, through effective family planning programmes we were able to cut the population growth rate by 50 per cent over the last two decades. In agriculture, we now produce sufficient food grains to feed our entire people. We have invested heavily in human resources development and have provided massive budgetary allocations for primary and secondary education. Schooling up to twelfth grade is free for girl students, and all are awarded stipends. Gender mainstreaming is a major policy thrust. In Bangladesh the empowerment of women receives the highest priority. This is achieved mainly through initiatives such as special provisions for education for girl children, employment of women in the garment industry, and micro-credit schemes that generate self-employment for women. Global recognition of these endeavours was manifest in our recent election to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Excellent cooperation exists between the Government and civil society. Bangladesh hosts some of the world's largest and most active non-governmental organizations. In our development process, we are ourselves in the driver's seat. A mix of appropriate macro-economic policies and effective utilization of external assistance has vastly reduced our dependence on foreign aid. A document at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, entitled "Successful development: models for the twenty-first century" says that

> "The lesson in Bangladesh is that official development assistance, when applied in conjunction with a country's efforts to resolve its own development challenges, can yield dramatic results."

Today what we seek is not compassion, largesse or charity, but greater market access for our manufactured products, fairer trade and more investment. We may still have a long way to go, but we believe we are on the right track.

At the international level, we are striving to reinforce mutually beneficial and cooperative relations with all countries. We are seeking, in concert with our development partners, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The special efforts made, and the successes achieved, in Monterrey, Johannesburg and at the special session on children have given us cause for hope. It is now important for all of us to seriously get down to implementing the promises made and to achieving the targets set. We are happy that our image abroad is one of a responsible, politically stable, moderate, democratic and constructive member of the international community. We have actively engaged our neighbours in the development of cooperation and understanding. As the Assembly will recall, it was President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh who first conceived of the concept of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Today, our Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, is also committed to bringing the Asian cooperation dialogue to fruition. As a demonstration of our commitment to global stability and peace, we have voluntarily given up the nuclear option and joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We actively participate in peacekeeping operations, and are currently one of the largest contributors of peacekeepers in the United Nations.

I should note, however, that there are certain issues that continue to trouble us. In South Asia, our own region, the volatility of the situation between two nuclear-capable countries is deeply worrisome.

Bangladesh encourages all concerned in South Asia to exercise utmost restraint and seek solutions to their differences through dialogue and meaningful engagement.

After emerging from the most destructive episode in its history, Afghanistan has yet to be given the wherewithal for recovery and reconstruction. The international community must redouble its efforts to secure peace throughout Afghanistan and accelerate the reconstruction and rebuilding of the country. Unless we do so, the long-term security and stability of our region will remain very uncertain.

In the Middle East, the continued denial of the right of the Palestinian people to their own State and to freedom greatly concern us. The continued illegal occupation of Palestinian land, the trampling of human rights and the atrocities perpetrated against the Palestinian people by Israel must end immediately. Serious efforts must be resumed to seek a comprehensive solution to the problem — a solution that addresses the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian people.

We welcome the announcement made in Baghdad with regard to the return of the weapons inspectors, and we see this as a significant step towards the fulfilment of obligations under Security Council resolutions.

The havoc wrought in Africa by ethnic conflict, disease and famine is very disturbing. The financial turmoil in Latin America is a matter of anxiety for all of us. Commitments to the least developed countries remain largely unfulfilled. The existence of large trade-distorting subsidies that impede development is painfully clear. Restrictions on the movement of factors of production, including manpower, remain a major impediment to progress. Lack of consideration of the emotional and human aspects of people's movement across frontiers remains a great source of pain. The concept of a global fund for poverty alleviation financed through some form of international taxation is also worth considering. These are issues that we, with our limited capacity, can do little to influence — though in our modest way we will do our very best to help. Those who can must do more.

For our part, we will play an effective role — as we are indeed doing — in all international forums. In the World Trade Organization we will continue to work with others to implement the development objectives of the Doha Round and to pursue fairer trade. We will cooperate with the international monetary institutions and other agencies, funds and programmes to promote the welfare of our people and those of a comparable milieu. Working within the United Nations, we shall endeavour in every possible way to strengthen its institutions and to support reforms that will render them more participatory, representative and democratic. These are pledges that are enshrined in the vision for the future of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh under the dynamic leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia. They are commitments that are at the core of the Bangladeshi ethos.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Julian Robert Hunte, Minister for Foreign External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Hunte (Saint Lucia): I should like to add the voice of my delegation to the voices of those who have already congratulated Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency and those who have thanked the outgoing President for his contribution to the work of the Assembly. Saint Lucia pledges its full cooperation to Mr. Kavan as he assumes the presidential mantle.

We are pleased that, at the commencement of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, we are welcoming Switzerland and East Timor to our Organization. We have no doubt that they will both enrich the deliberations of our organization as we seek to advance its cause. Saint Lucia, as a member of the Special Committee on decolonization, is particularly pleased that East Timor will at last able be to enter these hallowed halls as an independent State in its own right.

In this age of cutting-edge technology, scientific miracles and the conquest of space, it is barely conceivable that human misery and suffering are still not decreasing. From Africa to Asia and from Asia to the Caribbean, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is accelerating and spreading, while known killers such as tuberculosis and malaria continue to stalk human existence. We watch as large parts of humanity fall, often seeming to lack the impetus needed to have a substantial impact on such scourges.

A large percentage of the population of the developing world lives in degrading poverty, and many are on the brink of starvation and famine. Some 24,000 persons, most of them from the developing world, die each day of hunger. Approximately 12 million people

in Southern Africa now face starvation. Yet there is a worldwide glut in agricultural production. In some places there is too much; in others there is too little.

The crisis of the development agenda is reflective of the crisis of legitimacy that is being experienced by the global economic governance structure. Saint Lucia again calls for the reformation of the global economic governance system to ensure that the planet's resources constitute the common heritage of all mankind. A corollary to global economic reformation is the equitable sharing of resources to ensure a decent quality of life for all and the redistribution of wealth and power at the systemic level to redress existing injustices so that we no longer have a world with too much in one place and too little in another.

A major impediment to development is the lack of transparency, accountability and democratic norms within the operations of the global governance network. Saint Lucia has always upheld the democratic imperative within the domestic realm as the flagship for the advancement of social progress and development. Saint Lucia reiterates that it is only through democratic participation and the belief that all people are created equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities that the right of the peoples of the developing world to true self-determination and development can be realized. It is only by upholding the principles of transparency, accountability and democracy that the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and our own United Nations system can become relevant to the task of solving the problem of global poverty.

The Doha declaration alone will not prevent the exclusion of States from economic decision-making and global governance. The non-involvement of Governments in the development process runs counter to the original mission of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Saint Lucia challenges the United Nations system to raise its universal voice, in concert with the discordant coalition, opposing any unilateral determination of the fate of the planet's natural resources and the billions of poor people depending on them for survival. Saint Lucia calls for the democratization and reform of the WTO into an organization supportive of the sustainable development of all States. This is the only way that developing countries can protect their interests within the multilateral trading system.

Saint Lucia laments the fact that the developing world may have compromised its development agenda by signing the WTO agreements without the principle of special and differential treatment being an integral part of those agreements. This omission has to be corrected in the Doha round. Why is it so difficult to understand that, given the critical nexus between trade and development, developing countries cannot be subjected to the same expectations, rules and regulations that govern trade among developed countries? The ideology of a level playing field is a myth ill conceived. Equitable participation in world trade demands that special consideration and assistance be given to the developing world, particularly to vulnerable, small island States like Saint Lucia. We must resist — and I underscore the word "resist" — all attempts to make the WTO a mechanism for unleashing a silent economic war on the poor and powerless by protecting corporate interests while marginalizing Governments and people.

We need a Marshall Plan to address the terror of poverty and the stark disparities between the developed and developing world in trade technology, life expectancy and illiteracy. Monterrey produced neither a global development coalition nor a binding mandate with targets and resources for implementing the United Nations millennium goals of halving poverty, effectively addressing HIV/AIDS, closing the digital divide and strengthening Governments. The message from Monterrey is that there is neither political will nor resources available for development. Of the estimated $55 billion required annually to implement the millennium goals, Monterrey pledged only $5 billion over a period of three years. Further, official development assistance to developing countries has continued to decline from the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent to 0.24 per cent.

Despite the fact that debt servicing accounts for a net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries, draining a significant amount of development funds, Monterrey made no commitment to the cancellation of the crippling debt of developing countries. No attempts were made to stem the serious marginalization of small island developing States or to grant access to concessionary funding from international financial institutions for their development.

Sadly, Johannesburg was more of the same. The conference was convened to strike a global deal on

sustainable development, but failed to initiate the people-driven process necessary to transform the global economic crisis into development for all. No mechanisms were established to insulate decisions taken from being undermined in the current global economic governance system. The failure of Johannesburg to establish an international citizen's agenda — with clear targets, resources and commitments to implement development goals – that protects the poor and the planet will reverberate throughout the developing world.

The United Nations appears to have become complicit in its own demise, permitting the principles of universality and the quest for justice and equality to become obsolete. This institution was once the proud champion of the redistribution of global economic power and the establishment of a new international economic order. Today, however, in the major United Nations institutions, such as the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Development Programme and the General Assembly, there is a deafening silence.

Further, the gains made by the developing world within the United Nations are quickly being eroded. The post of Director-General for International Economic Cooperation and Development has been abolished. This was one of the few concrete outcomes of the developing world's thrust to secure a stronger presence in support of international economic cooperation. And the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, which effectively tracked the activities of transnational corporations in the South and their contribution to sustainable development, has been dismantled. Today, the market is left to determine everything, with corporate rule of the global economy resulting in untold havoc to the environment and the poor. No mechanism is in place to ensure corporate responsibility and accountability.

Saint Lucia urges the United Nations to reinstitute the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations. Further, Saint Lucia calls on the United Nations to resist any attempt to weaken and marginalize the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

While development within the United Nations system is being undermined through the cutting and freezing of the United Nations regular and core budget, there have been substantial increases in the peacekeeping budget. Military spending — particularly that of developed countries — keeps escalating, and the United Nations Development Programme and the Bretton Woods institutions are being reoriented away from development. Development is in need of a global coalition, without which we will pursue wars against terrorism in vain.

Saint Lucia condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. For small island developing States, however, security against terrorism and other threats is not merely a matter of military spending, but is rather a multidimensional concern encompassing matters such as drug trafficking and small arms, transnational crime, unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment. Therefore, whilst maintaining its peacekeeping mandate, the United Nations should not abandon the other mandates of its Charter — the economic and social development of all peoples — if it intends to remain relevant and credible. This institution needs to regain its balance and to listen to the fainting voice of humanity in a universal chorus proclaiming global peace, justice, prosperity and equality for all.

It would be remiss of me if I did not at this point reiterate Saint Lucia's call for an end to the economic embargo on Cuba and for that country to be allowed to pursue its right to the development of its people and to assume its rightful role within our hemisphere.

In closing, let me state quite categorically that, as a vulnerable small island developing State, Saint Lucia is among those countries which require the support and protection of the United Nations system and the safety of a strong, democratic and fair multilateral system most of all. We appreciate the support received from this institution and from friendly countries as we seek to advance our country's development. We also reaffirm our commitment to working with all Member States to ensure peace, security and development for all peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great pleasure to join in the heartfelt congratulations addressed to Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the high post of President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Undoubtedly, he will apply his extensive professional and life experience to benefit

this General Assembly session, so that it will give fresh impetus to the efforts of our universal Organization.

East Timor and Switzerland are new Members this year. The international community welcomes them with joy. We congratulate the Governments and peoples of those two friendly nations.

Every year the issues the United Nations must address become more challenging. The need for a universal organization has become especially urgent over the past decade. It is understandable. The cold war has ended and humanity has entered a new stage of development.

Addressing global issues and challenges through common efforts has become a basic dimension of that new stage. Another distinctive feature is the constructive nature of such efforts. A third dimension is common understanding that all those efforts, coupled with democratization of internal societies and international relations, should bring about improved living standards for Member States. The United Nations can and must play a significant role in coordinating national, regional and international efforts in the age of globalization.

Tajikistan has been a Member State for the 10 years of its new history. As the Tajik State was being established, a fratricidal conflict was sweeping the country. However, over the past five years, peace and stability have prevailed in Tajikistan. Respect for Tajik history and traditions, human rights, an atmosphere of tolerance for diverse opinions and views and focus on major concerns of the nation are all fundamental components of the peace process in Tajikistan, whose lessons could be applied in resolving conflicts in other hotspots of the world.

Tajikistan, which suffered to achieve its democracy, is creating today a secular society, has a substantial foundation for its development and looks to the future with optimism. That optimistic outlook is determined by President Emomali Rakhmonov's rational and carefully considered policy of establishing good relations with Tajikistan's neighbours and by the assistance and support received from the international community.

The Tajik people extend special appreciation to the United Nations, which, during the time of our difficult trials, demonstrated in the most effective manner its peacemaking and humanitarian capacities. The United Nations, working in close cooperation with the Tajik Government, is showing in Tajikistan its capacity to strengthen peace and stability. We are satisfied with the performance of the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peace-building in our country and believe that the experience it gained in Tajikistan can be used for the benefit of other States.

The rehabilitation of the economy, the eradication of poverty, increasing the living standard and job creation are the issues that are still referred to as our country's most pressing problems. Tajikistan is a State whose social and economic development depends, to a great extent, on the international community's common and comprehensive approach to the issues of combating poverty, financing development, ensuring an equitable international trade system, eliminating ecological threats and resolving demographic problems. In that context, we invariably favour further enhancement of the role of the United Nations as the core international forum for developing such a common approach.

Over the past few months, the Member States have achieved some progress in that area. Overall, we believe the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey was positive, and we are looking forward to the implementation of its resolutions.

Environmental issues and issues of sustainable development are among the top-ranking items of the United Nations agenda and, appropriately, are becoming a significant component of multilateral diplomacy. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, recently held in Johannesburg was one of the major events in that area. At the Summit, the world's top policy makers analysed the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 over the past 10 years. The concept of sustainable development that emerged from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, was further elaborated and acquired new meaningful content. The international community faces the task of meeting the challenges established at the forum in Johannesburg. Accomplishing that task could give us hope that problems such as poverty eradication, environmental protection and ensuring social equity can be resolved in a comprehensive manner.

It is our intention to make a viable contribution to implementing the World Summit resolutions. We hope

that international cooperation in that area will fully account for the specific conditions and economic capacities of the countries from different groups, particularly, the developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Over recent years we have witnessed a dynamic process in connection with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The number of Member States that ratified the Kyoto Protocol and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is increasing. Interaction between countries in addressing desertification and land degradation issues is gaining momentum.

Tajikistan has been an active participant in those important processes. We believe it is essential to consistently continue coordination of the implementation of the Conventions in order to avoid duplication and ensure effective allocation of limited international resources.

Among the most valuable assets of our planet are water resources. They are at the core of both ecological balance and economic prosperity. They are an indispensable prerequisite for food production, improvement of social welfare and economic growth. However, even today many regions of the world face a shortage of fresh water. According to the Secretary-General, if current practices of water usage persist, by 2025 two thirds of the world's population will be living in a country experiencing so-called water stress.

The urgency of the problem encouraged Tajikistan to propose the initiative of proclaiming the year 2003 the International Year of Freshwater. We believe that the preparation for that year and the various events planned within its framework, in particular, the Third World Water Forum, to be held in Japan in March 2003, will give Member States a good opportunity to exchange their expertise gained in applying successful patterns of water-resource management and in searching for needed finances and resources.

In putting forward the initiative for the International Year of Freshwater, we expected that the major focus of the events to be held in 2003 would be on universal access to freshwater and diminishing the possibility of conflicts related to water shortage. That would make a specific and substantial contribution to achieving the goals of sustainable development.

It is impossible to achieve the goals of sustainable development unless the economic component of globalization is given due attention and discrimination in economic relations is eliminated. In an environment where wealthy countries benefit from globalization and continue to get richer, while poor counties get poorer, social tensions increase and cause political extremism, including the most extreme form — namely, terrorism. Counteracting the threat of terror is a long-term endeavour, since it is a phenomenon that is alien to human civilization, and it is multidimensional and deep-rooted. In addition to uniting the will of all its participants, applying military resources and strengthening the international legal framework, the anti-terrorist coalition established following 11 September 2001 must direct its efforts towards elimination of the primary reasons for terrorism, which can be traced to unsettled conflicts and outrageous social and economic inequities.

Tajikistan is actively participating in the common effort to ensure a unified international legal framework for combating terrorism. Our country has become a participant in the most universal anti-terrorist conventions. We totally support the activities of the Security Council in this area. We highly appreciate the role of the Counter-Terrorism Committee that was set up in compliance with resolution 1373 (2001), under the leadership of Sir Jeremy Greenstock; this Committee has assumed a central role in the unprecedented effort to establish a global system to counteract international terrorism. Pursuant to the authority conferred on it by the United Nations Charter, the Security Council will continue to play an active role in preventing threats to international peace and security posed by terrorism.

It is essential to continue using all kinds of political, economic, financial and humanitarian measures in order to develop a comprehensive approach to the eradication of international terrorism. It is important that the development of fundamental principles to combat terrorism be enhanced at the international legal level. In this connection, we expect the General Assembly shortly to adopt a comprehensive convention on combating international terrorism, as well as to complete negotiating and adopting a comprehensive international convention on combating acts of nuclear terrorism.

We believe the time has come to convene a special session of the General Assembly in 2003 to discuss all aspects of combating terrorism and to adopt consolidated decisions. At that time, we could also discuss the progress made over five years on the implementation of the decisions of the twentieth special session dedicated to the illicit production, sale and trafficking of narcotics. In view of the ever-increasing drug threat, we regard the creation of an anti-narcotics coalition of States as an issue of critical importance. The war against the international terrorist underground will not be effective until the international community makes substantial progress in its struggle against drug cartels and narco-barons.

A future global system of counteracting terrorist and narcotics threats cannot be created without support from regional and subregional structures and institutions that have been active in this and other areas of international cooperation.

An increase in the number of regional organizations and the strengthening of their mechanisms not only reflects an objective need for filling the lacunae in the interaction of neighbouring States, but also meets the urgent need to establish additional channels for conducting a dialogue and exchange of views on the most important issues. The large-scale operations to liberate the Afghan people from the repressive Taliban regime and measures aimed at the restoration of peace and stability in war-ravaged Afghanistan have demonstrated what can be accomplished when the United Nations and regional organizations combine their efforts.

Today, our friendly neighbour, Afghanistan, continues to go through a complicated process of achieving national accord and establishing stable institutions of government and a stable political regime. The revival of an independent and peaceful Afghanistan is taking place under difficult conditions. The urgent problem of providing security still exists. The humanitarian situation also remains alarming. However, what has been accomplished by the Government of Hamid Karzai is very impressive.

It is important that the United Nations continue to coordinate the international community's common efforts in strengthening the process of restoring and rehabilitating post-war Afghanistan and completing the elimination of hotbeds of international terrorism on its territory and the eradication of religious extremism and the narcotics threat. In this context, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) faces serious challenges. We believe it is necessary to continue increasing economic and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and not stop at what has been accomplished so far.

The Government of Tajikistan will continue to contribute to the revival of Afghanistan through building its relations with the friendly Afghan people on the basis of friendship, mutual respect and multifaceted cooperation for the benefit of our two countries and regional security.

With respect to reform of the United Nations, and regional issues, it is important to realize that neither global challenges nor most of the urgent regional issues can be dealt with successfully unless the whole United Nations system is strengthened and its core role in international affairs is reinforced. To achieve this in practice, one has to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to reform the United Nations internal system and to recruit personnel with high professional skills. The Member States should assist the Secretary-General in his efforts to expand the capacity of the Secretariat to carry out peacekeeping operations, prevent and resolve conflicts and contribute to post-conflict peace-building. Reform also implies further efforts towards democratization of the United Nations system as a whole, so that the capacities and contributions of small countries, no matter how numerous their problems, can be united with those of large States.

We are firmly convinced that reforms should focus on improving the efficiency of special United Nations institutions and on the implementation of development projects. We deem it important that the United Nations reconsider the allocation of its resources, that it stop implementing programmes and projects of low effectiveness, and instead commit the freed funds to new priorities.

The year that has passed since the fifty-sixth Assembly session has convincingly demonstrated that the United Nations, with its 190 Member States, is irreplaceable when dealing with international affairs. As never before, the United Nations has proven its ability to meet the most complicated challenges faced by humanity. It is our conviction that, in the twenty-first century, by cooperating with the United Nations, we will be able to create a world without destructive wars, a world that will become secure and prosperous.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Chad.

Mr. Annadif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like, on behalf of all the members of the Chadian delegation that I have the honour to lead, and on my own behalf, to warmly congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. In discharging that heavy responsibility, he can count on my delegation's full availability and support throughout this session, all the more so since the international community has honoured my country by electing it to one of the prestigious posts of Vice-President of the Assembly. I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Members of the Organization for the trust placed in my country, Chad. Members may be assured that we shall do our utmost to deserve that trust.

My thanks and congratulations go also to Mr. Kavan's predecessor and to his team for the work accomplished during the fifty-sixth session.

I should also like to pay particular and well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose commitment and ceaseless efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development in the world are welcome and should be recognized.

Lastly, I express my sincere and warm congratulations to the Swiss Confederation on its admission to the Organization. Chad, which enjoys close relations of friendship and cooperation with that country, welcomes its decision to join the great United Nations family. A country devoted to democratic and peaceful values, Switzerland will undoubtedly contribute to enriching our debates on all issues.

The current session is taking place one year after the terrible attacks perpetrated against the United States of America on 11 September 2001, which plunged American families and those of other nations into mourning. The Government and the people of Chad once again join the rest of the international community in paying tribute to the memory of the thousands of innocent victims of that act of blind savagery, which nothing can justify.

Unfortunately, those sad events have brutally alerted us to the numerous challenges that we absolutely must face if we wish to one day bring about a just and equitable international society that enables each of its members to develop fully. In addition, those acts of despair can be checked only if their roots — which are nourished by unequal international relations broadening daily the gap between rich and poor — are eradicated. My country firmly condemns that form of political expression, from whatever side it may come, and is ready to associate itself with any initiative of the international community to establish a new world order based on democracy and sustainable development.

Today, the United Nations is called on more than ever to help to establish a fairer and more prosperous international society. We note with satisfaction the Organization's frequent efforts to ultimately eradicate the scourges of disease and malnutrition — in short, those of underdevelopment. In that regard, numerous world meetings at the level of heads of State or Government have been organized under the auspices of the United Nations or of specialized agencies with a view to implementing the decisions and recommendations of the Millennium Summit. But the point is not to have Summits; above all, we must match words with deeds.

The Republic of Chad, like all other developing States, aspires to a better life and well-being for its population. His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby rightly stated, in his inaugural address on 8 August 2001, that his mandate would have the double aims of peace and economic progress. In order to do that, Chad is relying on the early exploitation of its mineral and agricultural wealth. We take this opportunity to inform the Assembly and to reassure the international community, including the friends of Chad, that the work to carry out its oil project is proceeding under good conditions. According to forecasts, the first barrels of oil may be brought to market starting in July 2003.

However, despite the prospects offered to Chad by the oil age, the Government is aware of the weakness of the national economic structures, of the debt burden and of the imbalances that make the population's living conditions precarious. Once again, we call for our bilateral and multilateral partners to increase their assistance and simply to cancel external debt, as the African Union has always recommended.

Long captive to its domestic problems, the Republic of Chad, now more than ever before, intends to shoulder its responsibilities within the international community, particularly on the level of the African

continent. Therefore, the Government is committed to helping to make the African Union — whose birth was celebrated on 9 July 2002 at Durban, South Africa — a genuine instrument of the continent's political and economic integration. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is part of that major objective. In the framework of North-South and South-South cooperation, NEPAD deserves the support of Africa's development partners.

But again, Chad is among those who think that Africa's salvation lies in the hands of Africans themselves. To that goal, they must take courageous political decisions and transcend their differences so that the African Union can become a reality, because the disruptions and crises of all kinds suffered by that great and rich continent are sources of serious anxiety.

However, the latest news coming from various African subregions allow us to believe that an end to conflicts is in sight on the continent. Since the beginning of this year, several meetings of national reconciliation have taken place and several peace agreements have been signed, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Angola, in Burundi, in Sudan, in Sierra Leone and in Somalia. That offers real hope for African populations. Chad intends to fully commit itself to ensure that that hope is realized.

Along with other members of the international community, the Chadian Government is concerned at the situation that continues to prevail in the Middle East. Unfortunately, that intolerable situation results from non-compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly. In the light of its obligation to be fair to all Members of the Organization, the Council should ban any policy of double standards and should ensure respect for its decisions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). Genuine peace in the Middle East demands that.

Likewise, the Government of the Republic of Chad cannot remain silent on another situation of injustice that continues to preoccupy the Organization: its exclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan. That issue comes back to us every year like a boomerang because we handled it badly more than 30 years ago. For us, as a result, it is a matter of conscience that challenges all of us to find a solution. We have stated on a number of occasions that it is not a question of redressing one injustice by committing another;0 it is simply a question of giving back to the Republic of China on Taiwan, a democratic and responsible sovereign State, and to its people the place they should have on the international stage. This is why, once again, the Government of Chad calls for the admission of The Republic of China on Taiwan to the Organization.

At its creation in 1945 the United Nations had 51 Members. Now, almost 200 countries are full Members of the Organization. This growth means that it is time for an in-depth reform of its structures to allow for greater participation by all Member States and increased accountability for the taking of international decisions that have a definite impact on the life of all our citizens. This is because globalization should not be regarded only as economic, but also as political.

Thus, Chad feels that the restructuring of the United Nations is essential and should focus on the following two points: first, strengthening the role of the General Assembly in order to make it more democratic and more active in decision-making; and secondly, an increase in the number of the members of the Security Council in order to achieve better representation for all the geographic areas of the world. Chad therefore endorses that position, which is also that of the African Union.

Before I conclude my statement I wish to call to mind a happy event which took place in my country just one year ago. In July 2001 a significant scientific discovery was made in the Djourab desert in the north of Chad, by researchers headed by a French-Chadian paleontological mission. This was the discovery of the fossilized skull of a hominid known as *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, dating back approximately 7 million years. *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, which means man of the Chadian Sahel, has been nicknamed Toumai which means hope of life in the local language. Study of the skull has indicated that this is a new human species, a new earliest member of humankind.

This discovery has had a significant impact in the scientific community and in world public opinion, because it challenges the many theories concerning the origin of humankind. Toumai is the common ancestor of us all, and Chad is now regarded as the cradle of humankind. In order to mark this important discovery, the Chadian Government envisions the establishment of a department of paleontology to foster research and

education in this scientific discipline, as well as the construction of a museum to develop scientific tourism in Chad.

My country will be relying on the support of the international community to carry out these projects in the sphere of scientific research and paleontology in particular. All present are warmly invited to visit Chad, now known as the cradle of humankind, whose tourist assets have thus been enhanced by this new scientific discovery.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abou Drahamane Sangaré, Minister of State and Minister for External Relations and Ivorians Abroad of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Sangaré (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to convey to Mr. Jan Kavan the warm congratulations of my Government on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We equally extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We assure them that the Ivorian delegation will spare no effort in making its contribution to the success of this session.

We would be remiss if we did not mention here the tremendous work of His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, who, with his great experience led the difficult fifty-sixth session to a positive conclusion, of which we are all aware. Côte d'Ivoire is grateful for that. A reconciled Côte d'Ivoire conveys its fraternal greetings to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, with particular thanks for his tireless efforts. It is a great pleasure for my Government to welcome and congratulate the Swiss Confederation upon its admission as a State Member of the United Nations.

Members will agree with me that the fifty-sixth session was a very difficult one. How can we forget the sad memory of 11 September 2001, which will cast a shadow over the work of our Organization for a long time to come. This session in particular, as it immediately follows the fifty-sixth, must learn all the appropriate lessons from the last session and provide a new dimension to international relations.

In the opinion of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, the renewed need to recast multilateral inter-State relations can be articulated, inter alia, around the following themes: United Nations reform; a steadfast fight against poverty; human rights; and international security.

It has become a truism to say that if the United Nations had not existed, it would have had to be invented. After more than 50 years of existence — and this has been recognized over and over again — on the dawn of the third millennium, the United Nations would do well to shake off the dust and adapt itself to the new times.

Along these lines, for almost 10 years we have seen negotiations on reform of the membership and of the working methods of the Security Council. It is time for specific measures to be taken so we may have a comprehensive debate based on the positions of the various regional groups. For our part, Côte d'Ivoire is convinced that two permanent seats and three non-permanent seats for the African continent would be in keeping with the times. Côte d'Ivoire is ready to make a contribution to any resolution or decision which would help modernize the Security Council.

For 30 years following the Second World War, the priorities of the international community were such things as reconstruction, decolonization and the cold war, to name a few. Nowadays, misery and poverty, which appeal to human conscience, are, as far as we are concerned, the number-one threat to international peace and security.

The greater the gap between rich and poor countries, the more emigration there will be to the rich countries, whose forecasts and development programmes will then be undermined. Contrary to what some might think, in the opinion of my delegation the fight against poverty is an essential component of preventive diplomacy. Both inside and outside a given country, the fight against poverty is the prime operation for the maintenance of international peace and security. My Government has understood this, and we have decentralized our administration through the establishment of district councils. Now it is up to the 58 administrative districts to identify their own needs, to establish their priorities and carry out their development projects financed from the annual budget under the appropriate national legislation.

With respect to the financing of a decentralized administration, Côte d'Ivoire takes this opportunity to thank its developmental partners for their aid and support, and we appeal to the international community to make additional contributions to our decentralization

policy. I reaffirm that Côte d'Ivoire has enormous potential and, now more than ever, offers extraordinary opportunities for investment and partnership.

We welcome the results of the International Conference on Financing for Development, which was held at Monterrey from 18 to 22 March 2002, as well as the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, and the 2001 Doha meeting of the World Trade Organization. We would like to see the conclusions of those three important meetings turned into concrete action.

We cannot repeat it enough: the efforts of developing countries will be in vain unless measures are taken to ease the debt burden and unless the international community succeeds in preventing the negative effects of globalization.

After the fall of the Berlin wall, the market economy became part of the economic standards of the international community. This new economic understanding means more than ever that we must abandon the logic that says that we should have, on one hand, those who produce only raw materials and, on the other, those who produce only finished products. To enable the developing countries to enter the industrial age and have access to markets throughout the world, we need a better organization of international solidarity, and scrupulous respect for the resolutions that have been adopted.

In the opinion of my delegation, with the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa now offers a favourable framework for the exercise of international economic solidarity. NEPAD must remain a programme that assists the African Union, and not a new overlapping institution. Côte d'Ivoire is happy to see the establishment of the African Union, and it will play its role in consolidating this unique tool of international cooperation.

While we welcome the progress realized in the promotion and protection of human rights, Côte d'Ivoire is still deeply concerned about issues relating to the right to health. My delegation would like to return to the question of HIV/AIDS which, more so than malaria, is the number-one public health problem throughout the world. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2001 40 million people throughout the world, 58 per cent of them women, were infected by the HIV virus. Of the 40 million people who are HIV-positive, nearly 29 million live in sub-Saharan Africa. The disease is progressing, and in Côte d'Ivoire it is especially hitting the most active segments of the population, namely the 14-to-45 age group.

In spite of the many praiseworthy efforts made by Côte d'Ivoire, which has also pledged to implement a universal health insurance system, and those made by the international community in its fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the results do not yet meet people's expectations. As we await a miracle cure for the mutant AIDS virus, more than ever we have to redouble our efforts regarding prevention on the one hand, and access to medicine for the neediest segments of society on the other. It is also important that the struggle be waged within the framework of ongoing international coordination, which is the only guarantee of success, and that decision-makers show more interest in implementing the outcomes of such coordination.

Peace and the security of goods and persons are the alpha and omega of any development. While the end of the cold war seemed to justify a certain satisfaction, we must recognize that recent events do not give us much reason to rejoice. The destruction of light weapons in a few places should not let us ignore the submerged part of the iceberg. In spite of pledges made, the sale of light arms in particular continues to prosper, with the resulting child soldiers and disabled people, not to mention all the refugees and the homeless fleeing conflict areas.

The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held last year, delivered some conclusions which were generally accepted by everyone. My delegation hopes that very soon a report of the Secretary-General will enable us to assess the results of that Conference to date.

In terms of nuclear weapons, the key event of the past two years was the end of the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems between the two greatest nuclear Powers. This situation is of concern to Côte d'Ivoire. Therefore, my country is very happy to see that in the framework of a new agreement recently signed by the United States of America and the Russian Federation, those two nuclear Powers have decided on a two-thirds reduction of their nuclear

arsenals over a 10-year period, zero level being the ultimate objective to be achieved as soon as possible. Like other countries in the international community, Côte-d'Ivoire has taken note of this major event, and encourages the two parties to pursue their efforts towards a total reduction of the nuclear threat.

Here, my delegation would like to thank, commend and encourage France, our long-standing partner, which for the last three years, through its vigorous policy of disarmament, has significantly reduced its nuclear arsenal.

Let me reaffirm the position of Côte d'Ivoire on disarmament, which does not differ from the position of the group of non-aligned countries. It is imperative that everyone respect the non-nuclear zones established around the world, including the one created in Africa under the Pelindaba Treaty.

The events of 11 September 2001 were an appalling atrocity which caused the immediate loss of life of more people than ever in the history of terrorist attacks. Our objective should be to avoid a repetition of such attacks through concerted action, supported by the appropriate means. To combat this scourge, in our opinion, we must grasp the problem at its roots and understand all its political, economic, psychological and moral components. So that we do not play into the hands of the terrorists, the fight against terrorism should help bring peoples together. Therefore, the simultaneous dialogue among civilizations and cultures must inspire the action of the international community. Côte d'Ivoire has taken legal and economic measures to combat terrorism. It has set out to collaborate with other parties and to develop specific legislation to fight against terrorism by defining and punishing infractions.

My country will continue to assume the obligations of international solidarity against terrorism, as laid out in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). To do this, Côte d'Ivoire wishes to have, in addition to the financial and logistical means it sorely lacks, the support of the international community with regard to training in the legal, banking and police areas. But no matter what, my Government will continue its cooperation with the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, so that the fight against international terrorism will yield results which will help us preserve international peace and security.

The crisis which has shaken the Middle East for decades is without a doubt a serious threat to international peace and security. The persistence of this crisis is a challenge that appears to expose the impotence of the international community to deal with a conflict that, if we are not careful, could come to be accepted as commonplace. Yet we can at least say that since the start of the conflict, the international community has not folded its arms. Indeed, the United Nations resolutions on the questions are innumerable. The best known of them are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, resolutions supported by such forums as the Oslo and Madrid Conferences.

At the centre of the conflict are the inevitable issues of the need for the Palestinians to have a viable independent State, and of the need for the State of Israel to live in security and in peace with all its Arab neighbours, within internationally recognized borders. That is why it is important to welcome the Saudi initiative which recognizes Israel's right to exist next to a Palestinian State.

In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire is very happy to embrace Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002, in which the Council, with the concurrence of its five permanent members, affirmed a vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders.

In Africa, we are happy to see the return of peace in Sierra Leone, in Eritrea and Ethiopia, and in Angola. We must thank the political leaders of those States and all others who, one way or another, contributed to the end of hostilities in those countries. We call on them to help in the ongoing process of reconciliation and reconstruction.

While we welcome those positive developments, we are concerned by the ongoing hostilities in Liberia, the Sudan, Somalia and the Great Lakes region. We must all support the initiatives and the efforts of well-known individuals such as former President Nelson Mandela and President Bush, and those of the international community, particularly the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), for the return to peace and stability in this large region of our continent.

We urge all the sons and daughters of the region to understand that the return of peace and

reconciliation depends first of all on them. Only their will peacefully to settle their disputes, whatever their nature, will make it possible to put an end to the suffering of their peoples.

Thanks to the intelligence and good will of its people, Côte d'Ivoire has been able to reconcile and find an Ivorian solution to its recent political difficulties. It encourages all parties to conflicts to have confidence in themselves and in their ability to find appropriate solutions to the issues that divide them, in the interest of their populations and, ultimately, that of Africa.

I would like in conclusion to state that while the United Nations has "pushed back the frontiers of racism" (*A/49/PV.14, p. 7*), to quote former President Nelson Mandela, it can, with genuine political will, achieve equally impressive results in other areas. We must thus do everything we can to push far back the frontiers of hatred, intolerance, violence and poverty or indeed to destroy those evils. Let us build a better world, a world of peace and progress for ourselves and future generations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): First of all, I wish to extend to Mr. Jan Kavan congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. I also wish to take this opportunity to commend his predecessor for his invaluable contribution to what was achieved at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Allow me also to express our appreciation to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the effort he has been making to ensure that the United Nations becomes a more effective instrument for tackling the very many challenges faced by the international community.

My delegation would like to join others in welcoming the admission of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations. It is a country that has, indeed, contributed so much to the Organization over the years.

Our continent, Africa, and its peoples, continue to face enormous and daunting challenges. This is not new. This is something that has been going on for the last few decades, with the general economic and social situation in the continent deteriorating even further. The general trend has been one of an ever-faster marginalization of Africa. The continent has yet to see the benefits of globalization. Africa still awaits the creation of an enabling international economic context for progress in its efforts to wage war against poverty. That effort is unlikely to succeed without greater international cooperation. Many in Africa, including my own country, Ethiopia, are unlikely to meet the internationally agreed poverty-related targets and goals, including those set by the United Nations Millennium Declaration, without greater readiness on the part of the international community to contribute more to Africa's fight against poverty.

The eradication of poverty is not only Africa's challenge or only that of the developing world. As was reiterated at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world. The despair and hopelessness engendered by poverty have implications for the world in general — not only for the people of the South but for those of the North, as well.

Many might have felt that the Johannesburg Summit failed to rise to the occasion and that its achievement was not commensurate with the gravity of the challenges faced by the peoples of the world in a variety of areas, most of all, in areas most relevant to the eradication of poverty. But there was one thing which was unambiguously evident at the Johannesburg Summit. Those from both the North and the South stressed with one voice that the global apartheid we currently have is unsustainable. How can one implement that vision? This is what continues to elude the international community. It remains the case despite some progress that has been made, including at Monterrey.

The eradication of poverty in Africa, and in my own country, is not primarily the responsibility of the international community. It is primarily our responsibility to put our houses in order and to take the lead in rejuvenating Africa.

That is where in fact today there is a new development in Africa. Many in Africa are more prepared than ever before to take charge of their destiny. There is a new thinking in Africa today and a realistic resolve to ensure the regeneration of the continent. I am referring to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It is an initiative by Africa which demonstrates the readiness of the continent to take charge of its future. It is a concrete

commitment by Africa to take the necessary steps in both the economic and political areas towards creating enabling conditions for economic and social transformation. It is a realistic initiative that specifies and underlines the obligation of African countries in all areas relevant to the creation of conditions conducive to economic and social development. Good governance is one such vital obligation to which the initiative accords the necessary importance. It is a major step for Africa and one whose significance should be underlined. The commitment to democracy and good governance has major implications for Africa not only in economic development but also in creating conditions for nurturing peace and stability.

Nonetheless, NEPAD cannot succeed without the cooperation of Africa's partners and the international community. And succeed it must, not only because NEPAD's success is in the vital interest of Africa but also because it is in the interest of the world in general. The logic of globalization makes it obvious that no part of the globe is immune to the negative influences emanating from its other, less fortunate parts. Realistically speaking, we swim or sink together. It would be unwise to believe that the growing marginalization and decay of Africa will have no significant adverse implications for the stability and viability of the globalizing world. It is this common interest that we all share which is the basis for our mutual obligation for the success of NEPAD. I must state here that we have been encouraged by the preliminary response to NEPAD by many members of the international community, including the G-8 countries and others. We are still hopeful that even greater support and enthusiasm will be demonstrated by the international community to ensure that NEPAD will be workable.

Ethiopia subscribes fully to the NEPAD framework. We are indeed at present in the process of implementing the principles and ideas promoted by the initiative. We will continue to be committed to carrying out our obligations for good governance, for creating enabling conditions for economic development and for eradicating poverty.

All the efforts we are making to ensure success in the fight against poverty are bound to fail without peace and durable stability. Here as well, Africa, including our subregion, the Horn of Africa, requires the effective support of the international community. What we need is enlightened support which is transparent and targeted at ensuring durable peace and stability. What we require is support not compromised by tactical considerations which are short-sighted and likely to aggravate already existing problems. Coddling unaccountable Governments would not promote peace in the long run and would not bring about durable stability.

Ours is a region which has suffered so much, among other things because of strategic considerations which made expedient the propping up of unaccountable and authoritarian regimes. The result of all that has been disastrous for the region. Peace and stability in the Horn of Africa, as is true in all parts of the world, is dependent in a critical manner on the creation of conditions for good governance. This is a value which ought to be universally applied, including in our subregion. Durable peace demands it. The welfare of the people of our subregion makes it imperative.

Ethiopia will leave no stone unturned for peace in our subregion and in Africa as a whole. The effort we have been making for peace in Somalia within the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development is being made in that spirit. It is also in that same spirit that we shall continue to do our share for peace and national reconciliation in the Sudan. Most of all, we draw satisfaction from the fact that we have managed to come out of a war that was imposed on us. For our part, we are determined to leave behind the crisis we had with Eritrea. We shall remain committed to the peace process until its conclusion.

It has always been our conviction that it is in the vital interest of Ethiopia to nurture peace in our subregion. That is required by the war we have to wage against poverty, which is the only real enemy we have. But the promotion of the cause of peace in the Horn of Africa has not been that easy. Our subregion is an area of the world that has long been vulnerable to terrorist activities. Ours has been an area that, due in part to the prevalence of poverty, has been taken advantage of very recklessly. My own country has been among those to have suffered as a result. This is a challenge that we still have to contend with, and which we still continue to face. This first-hand experience of ours put us in a position where we can deeply share the anguish of the people of the United States over the 11 September terrorist attack, which we have condemned vehemently. As we mark the first anniversary of that evil deed, we

wish once again to express our solidarity with the United States and its people.

It is our conviction that success in the fight against international terrorism requires the genuine cooperation and solidarity of the entire international community, no matter who might be the target of such terrorism. All those who directly or indirectly support and encourage terrorism should be held accountable. Resources made available to terrorist groups, in whatever guise, should not be tolerated regardless of the area where this is taking place. In short, what is required is zero tolerance for terrorism regardless of its intended targets. It is not without reason that I am reiterating this point. For us in Ethiopia, terrorism is not a theoretical threat. It is a practical and immediate threat that we have had to face both before and after 11 September, including most recently. It is our earnest hope that the international community will do whatever is necessary to eliminate this scourge. We also hope that there will be better days ahead, when we will all concentrate on addressing the challenges that trouble our planet.

I would like to conclude by renewing Ethiopia's commitment to the United Nations and to what it stands for. We wish to see the United Nations become an even a more effective universal Organization and a more forceful and faithful custodian of the principles of international law. Our hope and our dream is that the United Nations will be an even more robust universal Organization catering to the legitimate interests of both big and small counties. We in Ethiopia will continue to contribute our share to the greater nurturing of multilateralism and to making the United Nations an effective custodian of those values.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Roberto Tovar Faja, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica.

Mr. Tovar Faja (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan, and through him the Czech Republic, on his well-deserved election to preside over the work of this session of the General Assembly. Allow me also to congratulate Switzerland on its recent admission to membership of the United Nations and to congratulate the Republic of Timor-Leste on its imminent admission.

Fifty-eight years ago, the founders of the Organization undertook to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Unquestionably, the main purpose of the United Nations is the promotion of justice and well-being for all. We must reaffirm that commitment today. We must dedicate ourselves to building a more just, free, harmonious and happy society. We must indeed draw the maximum advantage from the benefits of joint action and cooperation in order to create a world of mutual advantage. As stated in the Millennium Declaration, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity and equality at the global level.

However, we are still very far from reaching that goal. In the last 10 years, more than 3.5 million people have died in civil wars. One billion three hundred and eighty million people live in extreme poverty, and 854 million do not know how to read or write. Democracy, justice and the enjoyment of civil and political rights are far from being universal. We believe that we need to address the miserable and alarming situation of the world's children. More than 30,000 children die every day of diseases that are easily preventable. There are more than 300,000 child soldiers in the world. More than 150 million children suffer from malnutrition due to a lack of food, and many millions go without schooling. This situation is as serious as — or more serious than — the effects of terrorism, which are themselves abominable. However, these problems do not draw the public's attention and are relegated to a secondary place on the world's agenda.

We have stopped half way in our struggle to create a better world. Many examples attest to this bitter fact. It is right for us to celebrate the holding of the first elections after an armed conflict or the end of a dictatorship. However, those are just the first steps down the path of a democratic way of life. Unless the United Nations commits itself to ensuring the sustainability of democracy, elections, regardless of their inherent value, will not necessarily mean a victory in the fight for human rights. Democracy must be an instrument for attaining equitable development and creating favourable conditions for peoples who invest their hopes in it.

The sustainability of democracy can be safeguarded though the promotion of the fundamental social values of dialogue, harmony and reconciliation. That is also done by combating extreme poverty and the growing economic gap between various social groups, which are ills that weaken the social fabric and erode confidence in political institutions. Financial

crises foster conditions favourable to the existence of extremist and opportunist groups seeking to overthrow democratic Governments. Greater international cooperation for development is necessary to consolidate democracy. It is for that reason that we urgently call upon developed nations to implement the Monterrey Consensus, and in particular to fulfil their commitment to increase official development assistance. Costa Rica fully supports United Nations efforts to promote and strengthen democracy. But we also emphasize that the United Nations should not give any less attention to the creation of the economic and social conditions that will help to strengthen and preserve democratic institutions throughout the world.

We also believe that globalization, with its rapid development of information and communication technologies and growing economic and commercial interdependence, offers us tremendous opportunities for economic and social development. We must certainly take advantage of those opportunities to create a better world for all. However, globalization also poses serious dangers. Structural barriers, financial imbalances and the lack of capital for productive and social investment can cause the economic collapse of entire regions. Subsidies, restricted access to international markets and capital flight distort free competition. Globalization may widen the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest sectors of society. The digital divide may exclude the most vulnerable from the benefits of the modern economy and cast a long shadow over the futures of those left behind. It is essential that we make greater efforts to protect the most vulnerable groups and nations.

The United Nations must call on the developed countries to open their markets and to abolish subsidies, thus enabling developing countries to have access to the benefits of globalization. Thus, in combating inequality and extreme poverty, we will build more equitable and just societies.

Human dignity has been championed ever since the founding of the United Nations. Government corruption, in all its forms and at all levels, is a genuine breach of human rights. It is outrageous that unjust leaders should enrich themselves by corrupt means and thus impoverish their peoples. It is scandalous to see how certain rulers divert public funds to their private accounts while reducing their peoples to the most appalling poverty. At the same time, the Governments of some States Members of the United Nations fuel corruption by granting tax deductions for bribes offered abroad. There are even some Member States that protect corrupt leaders under the guise of banking secrecy. The United Nations should forbid all such acts and prevent the granting of amnesty, asylum and travel visas to those who seek to evade justice.

The protection of human rights may be weakened without multilateral protection, monitoring and sanctions mechanisms. Costa Rica advocates the creation of a new generation of human rights mechanisms to provide greater protection to all individuals. This effort has already born its first fruit in the form of a draft optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. That legal instrument, recently adopted by the Economic and Social Council, will be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration in the next few days. I urge all States actively to support the draft as a sign of their unequivocal commitment to human rights and to the primacy of the dignity and integrity of all human beings.

We welcome the recent entry into force of the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. Human kind at last has an effective, independent and impartial judicial organ with jurisdiction to try the most serious crimes against human dignity. We must not weaken it.

While the United Nations upholds the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, requiring just means and institutions to resolve differences, the International Court of Justice — the United Nations main judicial organ and guarantor of international law, responsible for ensuring the rule of law in international relations and for preventing arbitrary and casuistic interpretations of legal norms — has become a purely rhetorical device. Very few States Members of the United Nations have accepted its mandatory jurisdiction without reservation, while others have made the situation even worse by unjustifiably withdrawing or modifying their acceptance of its jurisdiction. Only 12 nations accept the mandatory jurisdiction of the Court without reservation or condition. To ignore the authority of the highest judicial organ of the society of nations is tantamount to closing the door to justice and endangers the integrity of the international legal order.

What alternative is there for nations if they cannot rely on judicial bodies to settle their differences? The only alternative is force. It is essential for all States Members of the United Nations to accept without condition the obligatory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. Only thus will we be able to create a more just, peaceful and secure world.

A more just world will necessarily be more peaceful. Justice demands respect for others and for their freedom — in other words, tolerance. Peace in many regions of the world is seriously threatened by intolerance. In the Middle East, the rights of the peoples of Israel and Palestine are being violated. The intolerance of one leader is today making a country like Iraq the possible setting for endlessly bitter war. How different the situation would be if it had a fair Government respectful of human rights. The world has also witnessed with concern the growing dispute between India and Pakistan and the threat of nuclear war in that region.

My country would like to see greater tolerance prevail in the Taiwan Straits. We hope to see a just settlement that would fulfil the desires of the entire Chinese people. Costa Rica has historically enjoyed and continues to enjoy close friendly relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan. Creative agreements have been reached in many international organizations to permit the participation of the Republic of China in their work. The world would be a far more peaceful place if we were able to find an innovative accord to allow that country and its people to be represented with dignity in this and other international organizations.

While it is a principle of the United Nations to prevent violence and to achieve lasting and stable peace, there are Governments that transfer weapons to rebel and terrorist groups and States Members of the United Nations that scorn efforts being made for disarmament and the reduction of military expenditure. We call for the adoption of a legally binding framework convention to regulate the arms trade. Our experience as a disarmed nation has taught us that not spending on weapons is the best decision for those countries that are truly committed to the well-being of their peoples.

We urge the nuclear States truly to commit themselves to disarmament negotiations. We deem it necessary to adopt a comprehensive convention to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. In the meantime, all States must renounce the development of new nuclear weapons and ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We cannot commit ourselves only half-way to human dignity, equality and justice. We must not allow our children, the future generation, to be able to condemn us for doublespeak. If we can do that, we will be making a true contribution to their inheritance of a better world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Niger, Her Excellency Mrs. Aïchatou Mindaoudou.

Mrs. Mindaoudou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to say that the leadership shown by the President in presiding over this session makes us confident that our deliberations will continue in a spirit of dynamism and optimism for the development of international relations. Niger is very happy to convey to the President and to other members of the Bureau of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly our heartfelt congratulations.

We remain convinced that President Kavan will follow up the remarkable work done by his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, with the same human qualities for the good of the international community as a whole.

I wish to reiterate to our brother, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, the congratulations of the people of Niger for the prestige and effectiveness of his deeply appreciated work done in the service of humanity.

I also wish to congratulate the Swiss Confederation on becoming a new Member, and Timor-Leste, as an imminent Member of the Organization. We are convinced that their participation will help enrich our debates.

The American people have been mourning the tragic events of 11 September 2001 for a year now. The whole world has taken full measure of the threat that terrorism poses to peace and security. In Niger, we cannot stress the fact enough that, in order to be effective, the fight against terrorism must avoid taking a piecemeal approach. It must be long term and it must be conducted within the framework of international legality, which is epitomized by the United Nations.

Niger agrees with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001), and it is firmly committed to all subregional, regional and international initiatives aimed at combating terrorism in all its forms.

At the same time, in order to succeed in the fight against terrorism, we must take into account the need to develop a more just and equitable economic and political order, since it has been shown that poverty, ignorance, injustice and all kinds of frustrations are factors that can produce blind extremism.

Speaking of international peace and security, I am pleased to recall that Niger is a peaceful country that contributes actively to efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament. In that regard, I would like to point out that in that field, my country, pursuant to article 3 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, has accepted an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, on a system of monitoring and safeguards for its uranium production. Regarding conventional weapons, Niger is happy that the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects has adopted a programme of action to combat that scourge.

Our concerns were taken into account in the Bamako Declaration, but there is still work to be done, particularly in terms of technical and financial assistance measures to support disarmament programmes and reintegration programmes for former combatants. While it is true that no region of the world has been spared, there is no doubt that developing countries, particularly African countries, are the ones suffering the most from the devastating effects of the proliferation of light arms and small weapons in terms of their security, stability and development. That is why the bodies charged with monitoring, detecting and prosecuting infractions committed along those lines must be strengthened.

Since 1994, Niger has had in place the National Commission for Collecting and Controlling Illicit Weapons, whose task is to help the political authorities at the highest level identify, design and put implement strategies to fight the proliferation of light weapons.

In that context, the Government of Niger and the Department for Disarmament Affairs of our Organization are cooperating closely for the success of a project to collect illegal small arms and light weapons for the entire West African subregion. That is a part of the regional and subregional initiatives aimed at cutting off the illicit movement of small arms and light weapons.

The peace that we wish for Niger is the same peace we wish for the rest of the world. That is why our country has always tried to make its modest contribution to settling conflicts that threaten peace and security in Africa and throughout the world. In spite of our limited resources, we have sent contingents to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and civilian police officers to Haiti, Timor and Kosovo, to support the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the international community to restore and consolidate peace.

The Government of Niger reaffirms its ongoing availability to send contingents to all United Nations peacekeeping operations.

For a few months now the international community's attention has been focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whose peace process is now more paralysed than ever. Niger wants once again to reaffirm before the Assembly that a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict necessarily requires establishing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the creation of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State. On the basis of that conviction and in light of all kinds of false starts that have characterized the peace process in Palestine and the Middle East, Niger has made a sovereign decision to break off its diplomatic relations with Israel, which continues to deny the Palestinian people their legitimate right to self-determination.

In Western Sahara, the Republic of Niger supports the efforts of the United Nations, on one hand, to enforce the settlement plan and, on the other hand, the relevant Security Council resolutions, in order to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. The laudable action of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, should be followed up and supported until a positive conclusion is achieved, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In that context, we think that United Nations resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir must be speedily implemented so that the Kashmiri people can exercise their right to self-determination, which would allow to defuse that hotbed that involves two nuclear States —

India and Pakistan — and to avoid a serious threat to peace and security in the South Asia region. Therefore, Niger, a member of the contact group established by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, reiterates the appeal already made to the two parties to step up their negotiations in order to achieve a peaceful settlement of that conflict.

Niger, like almost all African countries, faces a number of major challenges, which require the international community to provide the necessary support to help them in the search for solutions and in consolidating their economic renewal programme. From that standpoint, the developmental strategy that we have implemented gives priority to the culture and the promotion of good governance through a good-conduct mechanism and public affairs management that focuses on concerns such as transparency and civil society participation in all socio-economic decisions. This is the time to sincerely thanks all the bilateral and multilateral partners of Niger, particularly the United Nations institutions, for having been kind enough to continue to support the efforts of my country to create an institutional environment conducive to giving us social peace. That assistance is much appreciated and is necessary in this critical phase of the national construction process.

In economic terms, never before has mankind had so much wealth and potential overall to generate common benefit. The positive world economic situation could give us hope to establish a more just economic order that would be more conducive to poverty reduction. In that regard, Niger welcomes the new partnership, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and we believe that that programme, which crystallizes the hopes of our continent today, must be aimed at bringing together the necessary conditions and means for the effective participation of all African countries to the multidimensional developmental process within the framework of the African Union.

Poverty is an affront that can no longer be tolerated in a world of abundance that has the means to vanquish it if there is the necessary political will. Today, we must note that 52 per cent of people who live on less than a dollar a day are found in Africa, which is the most indebted part of the world.

A clear look must be taken at globalization, which in the 1990s gave rise to hopes but today is a source of concern because of the growing inequalities it is creating. In less than a year, we have discussed global problems four times, and we know the true remedies. We need a more elevated concept of international cooperation that draws its essence from strategic partnership. However, we can rejoice in the unanimous will that the international community affirmed in adopting the Johannesburg Plan of Action in September.

The special session of the General Assembly devoted to HIV/AIDS, held in July 2001, demonstrated eloquently our degree of awareness of the terrible danger that that disease represents for the human species. The establishment of a special fund to fight AIDS is an important step in the world crusade against AIDS and other major epidemics. Progress must be made within the framework of initiatives undertaken by the world Summits held at Cairo, at Copenhagen and at Beijing.

My country expects a greater degree of solidarity from the industrialized countries, particularly with regard to increasing the volume of official development assistance, a traditional development source. At the same time, we must unite our efforts to mobilize financial resources and to establish a humanitarian fund under United Nations auspices. It is indispensable and urgent that we reverse the trend of declining official development assistance, which, the Assembly will recall, is at its lowest level in 50 years. In fact, many difficulties have conspired to keep our countries at the bottom of the human development index. The state of poverty affects 63 per cent of our compatriots, and 34 per cent of them live below the extreme poverty line. Those populations, deprived of minimal basic social services, are the victims of a continued deterioration in their standard of living.

The growing scarcity of financial resources has caused, among other things, a drastic decline in public investment, particularly in the social sectors, thus depriving 80 per cent of Niger's rural citizens of basic social benefits. Niger has decided to undertake measures to reverse that trend through its poverty reduction strategy, which was formulated and implemented after a participative process. Its goal is to substantially reduce the suffering of 80 per cent of the population. That strategy is now the only frame of reference for Niger's economic, financial and social policies.

This year, under the direct supervision of the President of the Republic, we have launched an extensive programme, called Special Programme 2001, which consists of building 1,000 classrooms, 1,000 dispensaries and 100 mini-dams to fight poverty. A good part — more than 80 per cent — of that operation has already been completed.

I should also like to express again from this podium our deep appreciation for the support that our developmental partners have continued to give us for the implementation of our National Framework Programme to fight poverty, which Niger formulated and which is among our highest priorities. However, the crucial problem of African debt, which is annihilating all our development efforts, calls for an effort by the entire international community to help us to implement — without delay or any conditions other than those of good governance — satisfactory policies and mechanisms for its solution.

The United Nations remains the best instrument for helping us realize the new world order to which we all aspire, so long as we carry forward the so-called quiet revolution begun by the Secretary-General four years ago. In conclusion, I should like to express the full confidence that Niger and its people place in the United Nations, which remains an institution of hope based on the principles of justice, equity, peace and progress.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/57/390/Add.2)

The Acting President: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I should like to inform members that, since the issuance of document A/57/390 and Addendum 1, Chad has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of that information?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: That information will be reflected in document A/57/390/Add.2, to be issued tomorrow morning.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Philippe Antonio, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Haiti.

Mr. Antonio (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the President of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, I should first of all like to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. He can be assured of the Haitian delegation's full support in the exercise of his duties. I should also like to congratulate his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, on the talent he demonstrated in conducting the work of the fifty-sixth session.

I should also like to pay tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the Organization, for his ceaseless efforts to maintain international peace and security.

In addition, I wish to welcome the Swiss Confederation and East Timor to the Organization as States Members. Undoubtedly, their presence in this institution will contribute significantly to the pursuit of the noble objectives of the United Nations.

The entire world has just commemorated the first anniversary of the tragedy of 11 September 2001. The Government and the people of Haiti again express their sympathy to the people and the Government of the United States. We continue to share the distress of all the families of the victims of that barbarity, which touched all races, cultures and nations of the world. It is humanity that has been struck, and humanity will always remember that sad event.

The Government of Haiti reaffirms its condemnation of terrorism, one of the most flagrant forms of human rights violations. Terrorism represents a grave danger, and we must unite all our efforts to combat it in all its forms and manifestations. In that connection, my Government reaffirms its commitment to supporting the relevant resolutions of the Organization as an expression of its respect for the precepts of international law.

Reform of the Security Council, which has been discussed for some time, is, more than ever before, of the highest importance. Haiti continues to call for more

openness in its operations and for greater participation in its decision-making.

The Charter of the United Nations, ratified by all States Members, evokes the sacred principles of maintaining international peace and security as well as the right of peoples to determine their own future with the leaders they choose.

In that connection, the Government of Haiti expresses its grave concern at the escalating violence in the Middle East, and particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Haitian Government supports the creation of a Palestinian State, while recognizing Israel's right to exist within safe and internationally recognized borders. We call on the parties to settle their differences peacefully through dialogue and diplomatic means.

In the same spirit, we appreciate the negotiations initiated between the two Republics of Korea, and we are in favour of a rapprochement between the populations on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Despite Iraq's acceptance of the unconditional return of the inspectors, the Haitian Government is concerned at developments in the Iraqi situation. In order to deal effectively with this problem, the relevant United Nations resolutions must be applied.

Regionalization is an important tool to facilitate partnerships among States as they strive to ensure the well-being of their people. In that context, my country is gratified by its full integration within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), where it will contribute to the socio-economic development of the region.

Humanity today is facing serious challenges, including poverty, the AIDS pandemic, drug abuse, hunger and illiteracy. The population of the least developed countries is about 614 million, one third of whom have to survive on less than $1 per day. Characterized by weak institutions and an inadequate infrastructure, those countries are affected by many different problems. The sub-human conditions under which many of their people live are a source of social tension. Poverty increases in proportion as capital decreases.

We returned from the Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg summits with renewed hope. Expectations are great, in keeping with the promises made. It is not enough, however, to hope for sustainable development. We must have the will to implement measures to attain it and respect the commitments undertaken. Leaders must take action to ensure sustainable development, which is in the best interests of our peoples.

Education and training can roll back poverty, free people from ignorance and put them on track to social and economic progress. On the basis of that conviction, the President of Haiti, Mr. Jean Bertrand Aristide, officially launched, on 7 September 2001, a national literacy campaign, to which he attributes overriding importance. The goal of this large-scale and ambitious initiative is to help 3 million people learn to read before 1 January 2004, when we will celebrate the bicentennial of our independence. The head of State is counting on the active participation of our literate citizens in the work of national construction.

Glaring injustices are built into our country's traditional socio-economic system. These injustices are responsible for wide disparities between the various social sectors — a situation that contributes in large part to the anachronistic nature of the general structures of our country, which is the only least developed country in the Americas.

Against that background, the Government has been doing its utmost to fight the financial embargo, which the international community imposed in response to the controversy of the elections of 1 May 2000. Unfortunately, it is the most vulnerable sectors of society that are penalized by those unjustified sanctions.

The recent adoption by the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) of resolution 822 in support of strengthening the democratic process in Haiti has opened up encouraging prospects for our country in beginning to move towards normalization.

My Government is determined to stay the course in ensuring that elections remain a crucial element of that advance. We have great expectations of the international community's support in this regard. In this context, we are hoping for assistance, and for election observers in particular. At the same time, in the spirit of resolution 822, we appeal once again as a matter of urgency for an end to the financial embargo.

The adoption of OAS resolution 822, which demonstrates the commitment to Haiti of a number of OAS member countries, constitutes a step in the right

direction. We would like to draw attention to that expression of fraternal solidarity.

We are also grateful to the States members of OAS whose joint efforts made possible the adoption of that consensus resolution, in particular the Federal Republic of Brazil, which currently coordinates the Latin American Integration Association and OAS groups, and the Central American countries. We would like to make special mention of our neighbour, the Dominican Republic, which has continued to reaffirm its solidarity with Haiti during this difficult period — solidarity that is manifested in different ways wherever the Haitian cause is discussed and needs to be defended. Above all, we would like to thank our sister nations in CARICOM, whose delegations to the OAS co-sponsored, with Haiti, the draft resolution, thereby maintaining the spirit of fraternal generosity, as is their custom.

During the crisis, a number of countries Members of the United Nations, in particular Japan and Cuba, continued to cooperate with Haiti. Despite the embargo and the other difficulties that it has to deal with, Cuba is enthusiastically pursuing a programme of cooperation with Haiti, in particular in the areas of health and agriculture. The Haitian people owe a debt of gratitude to all of those countries for their expressions of solidarity in our quest for dignity and collective affirmation.

OAS resolution 822 provides the entire nation with an opportunity; it holds out the potential for progress for all the Haitian people. In the context of the forthcoming celebrations of two centuries of independence, Haiti needs to galvanize its collective energy so that we can build our national home. To that end, the Haitian Government will hold an ongoing dialogue and continue to practise openness and flexibility, as called for by President Aristide. In that spirit, despite our well-known scarcity of resources, it has decided to compensate the victims of 17 December 2001, in accordance with OAS resolutions 806 and 822. Likewise, President Aristide will continue to call on the opposition to observe a patriotic truce in order to facilitate the rehabilitation of the country and support the Haitian people.

In this context, my country appeals once again for us to place human beings at the forefront of relations among various countries. This planet — the theatre of our common destiny — can thus become a world fit for all of its inhabitants through the advent of a "humanism without borders". On that basis of that conviction, the Republic of Haiti, on the eve of the bicentenary of our independence, invites the international community to help us to set in motion a process that will enable us to overcome the shocking reversals of the past and bring us into the modern world.

I hope that all of the nations of the world share these exalted hopes and that they will join us in celebrating this important event, to which the Government and the people of Haiti invite them, in January 2004.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Norman José Caldera Cardenal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mr. Caldera Cardenal (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first of all to congratulate Mr. Kavan on his election to the presidency.

On 21 March at Monterrey, Mexico, the President of Nicaragua, Enrique Bolaños Geyer, announced that "a process of moral renewal has been launched in Nicaragua, with a crusade against public and private corruption".

On that same day, the President also announced that, in the spirit of the new era of moral renewal,

> "a Nicaraguan judge has just found three former officials of the previous Government and three other people guilty of acts of corruption that impoverished our people. The judge left pending the case against former President Alemán and eight other officials of the previous Government".

President Bolaños went on to say:

> "With a view to continuing my policy of zero tolerance of corruption, I must return to my country as soon as possible to contribute, with justice and transparency, to the historic landmark constituted by this bold decision."

A few days ago, in a similar case, another courageous Nicaraguan judge sentenced members of the former President's immediate family to jail.

Today, I have come before this General Assembly on behalf of an entire people to reaffirm, in deed, Nicaragua's commitment to governance, transparency, accountability and to the principles of the rule of law.

There is much at stake today in Nicaragua. Not only must we punish corrupt officials and recover for our country Government money that was diverted and laundered, but also the results of our efforts will be crucial to the struggle waged by other peoples of our region and of the world against this scourge. Nicaragua's success will be an incentive for the entire international community. The failure of transparency in Nicaragua would set a bad precedent for humankind.

We have not fought this battle alone. The support of more than 84 per cent of our population has been coupled with the moral and economic support of many countries, embodying the democratic values shared by us, the peoples of the United Nations. To them, to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to the international organizations that have supported us, we extend our sincere gratitude.

In order to ensure that the changes we have made are irreversible, we will need sustained and adequate support. In this way, we will preserve the great moral heritage of humankind — democracy exercised with honesty and accountability.

As a part of this great heritage, we are today discussing human development, conceived as the State's ultimate purpose, to be attained through democratic governance, economic growth and social equity. We understand governance to be the result of doing things correctly in the political sphere — transparency, human rights and sovereignty. We see growth as the result of doing the right things in the economic and financial spheres, foreign exchange, fiscal and monetary policies and competition. And we understand equity as the result of doing things right in the social sphere — namely, in education, health, housing and gender equality.

Progress in bringing together these three elements that comprise human development will not be possible until corruption is rooted out. By its very nature, the scourge of corruption has an impact that transcends national borders. In this regard, we offer our full support to the work being carried out by the special committee responsible for negotiating a United Nations convention against corruption. From this forum, we appeal to the international community to commit itself to the broadest possible mutual assistance and cooperation in investigating or prosecuting acts of corruption.

Terrorism is just as abhorrent as corruption. This month we remember with anguish the tragedy of 11 September, when thousands of innocent people perished, many of them heroically. This tragedy, like all terrorist acts, must never be forgotten. At the same time, international cooperation to deal with such crimes must remain permanently on our agenda. It is essential that we coordinate activities to prevent and punish such terrorist activities, which cause so much pain and suffering, with the full force of the law.

Nicaragua wishes to reaffirm once again its unconditional support for United Nations activities to combat international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In Nicaragua, we have already set in place a National Plan against Terrorism and Related Crimes, designed to strengthen cooperation among institutions, and with the aim of preventing, combating and eliminating this scourge, and complying with Security Council resolutions.

The case of Iraq is a challenge and a test for the entire multilateral system that we have been constructing. It is up to us to either help strengthen it or help to weaken and fracture it. While it is true that we are all in favour of multilateral action, it is also undeniable that inertia and inaction undermine confidence in our collective will. The multilateral system must demonstrate the dynamism which is its very raison d'être by taking joint, concerted and timely action to resolve conflicts.

We wish to see a system capable of reacting with specific, timely and effective measures to dangers that threaten international peace and security, a system that does not find itself overtaken by circumstances. Nicaragua takes the view that the immediate and unconditional return of United Nations weapons inspectors to Iraq, in a climate of complete cooperation, can only be regarded as an important part of a greater effort aimed at the elimination of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, within the context of the global interests of the international community and in compliance with all pertinent Security Council resolutions.

The reform of the United Nations is also part of the desire to respond effectively. Reform basically revolves around new organizational and administrative structures, which, without a doubt, have gradually enabled the United Nations to act with greater unity of purpose, coherence and flexibility. Nicaragua, like the

Secretary-General, believes that there is still great potential for progress, and we must all ensure that the Organization's work programme includes the priorities set out in the Millennium Declaration.

No reform of the United Nations would be complete without the long-awaited expansion of the Security Council in order to enable it to respond fully and effectively to current and future needs. Similarly, we must pursue efforts to revitalize the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in order to empower the Organization fully to assume its responsibilities, as enshrined in the Charter. Nicaragua shares the interest of Member States in strengthening the Organization, with a view to optimizing its efforts to maintain international peace and security, prevent conflicts, promote sustainable development and eradicate poverty.

The recent World Summit on Sustainable Development filled us with hope and, at the same time, uneasiness. On the one hand, we saw the degree of attention being focused on the problem of environmental degradation. But, on the other hand, the path to achieving the balance between development and environment is still long and arduous, particularly for the least developed countries. Before us lies the challenge of generating greater wealth and more jobs without harming our environment. We cannot achieve this without the support of the developed countries, which must help pay the price of the benefits they reap from our efforts. Therefore, I wish to recall the Monterrey consensus, where we urged those developed countries that have not yet done so to adopt specific measures to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product for official development assistance (ODA) to the developing countries.

Nicaragua is aware that violence, civil and international wars, the scourge of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), drought and poverty are the main problems afflicting the African continent in recent years. However, we note with concern that international cooperation and assistance to Africa are diminishing. The efforts of African Governments to achieve economic growth and alleviate poverty must be matched.

Development efforts have also been given direct expression in Central America, where we have reached important agreements and taken decisions that today enable us to say that our region is embarking on a new era in its history. On 21 June last, in the city of Granada, Nicaragua, we held the Twenty-First Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of Central America. This provided the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to moving towards the consolidation of a Central American Customs Union, which will become a reality on 31 December 2003. The Customs Union was conceived as a means of contributing to the economic and social development of our countries. It will promote smooth interregional trade, reduce the costs of transport owing to border delays, facilitate the movement of persons and vehicles, and, at the same time, attract international business and investment to the region.

Nonetheless, the prolonged halt in the international economic recovery was exacerbated in Nicaragua by uncharacteristic problems in the external sector, owing to the high price of imported oil and the lowest coffee prices in history.

According to data provided by Gabriel Silva, President of the Colombian Coffee Growers' Federation, five years ago, coffee consumers paid 30 billion dollars while producers received 12 billion dollars, or 40 per cent. Today, consumers pay 65 billion dollars but producers receive only 5.5 billion dollars or less than 8.5 per cent.

This critical situation, which is generating unemployment and hunger in the productive areas of Nicaragua and other producer countries, seems to be caused by a cartel of coffee-roasters, a situation that must be remedied as soon as possible through measures to promote competition in consumer markets and on the international market.

Nicaragua congratulates Switzerland on recently joining the United Nations as a new Member and Timor-Leste, which is about to join. Their presence among us will contribute new ideas and approaches to strengthening efforts for a better world, and — paraphrasing the representative of Switzerland's statement to this General Assembly — will enhance the universality of the United Nations in the best interest of humankind.

In this same connection, my country, aware of the principle of universality and equality that inspired the United Nations, considers it a priority to permit the 23 million inhabitants of the Republic of China on Taiwan to enjoy the universal right to participate in international affairs through its own delegation to the

United Nations, parallel to and with the same rights of participation as the People's Republic of China, whose Government has never exercised hegemony over Taiwan.

Nicaragua, as a founding State of this Organization, reaffirms its commitment to the Charter and its aspiration to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council during the elections to be held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

I spoke earlier of a new era of moral renewal in Nicaragua rooted in the values of the United Nations. I believe that when we speak of strengthening democracy, reforming the Organization, fighting corruption, terrorism and drug trafficking, halting the arms race or providing joint, timely and effective responses to the dangers which threaten us, we are really speaking of one and the same thing: belonging jointly to an Organization that holds and safeguards our trust and collective action based on the principles that united our peoples on that historic day to create the United Nations.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to announce that the report of the General Committee will be issued tomorrow morning as document A/57/250. In this context I should like to announce that the General Assembly will consider that report on Friday, 20 September 2002 in the afternoon, immediately after the conclusion of the General Debate.

I now call on the chairperson of the delegation of Turkmenistan, Her Excellency Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Let me first of all convey greetings and wishes of peace and prosperity to the people of your countries from the President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov.

Allow me to congratulate the President on the occasion of his election to such a high and responsible post and wish him success in the organization of the fruitful work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to welcome the Swiss Confederation and Timor-Leste on their membership this year in the United Nations.

From the first days of its independent development, neutral Turkmenistan has cooperated closely with the United Nations and considers that cooperation the main direction for its foreign policy.

The key issue for Turkmenistan as a neutral country in such conditions is cooperation in the name of peace and security and the well-being and prosperity of its people. We constantly feel that we have the support of the United Nations for our foreign policy initiatives aimed at strengthening these goals. Our commitment to these international obligations as a permanently neutral State remains unchanged.

The importance of promoting the role of the United Nations is constantly becoming more obvious against the background of current developments of both global and regional processes where the concentration of collective efforts and the adoption of decisions that take into account various interests are required. Turkmenistan stands for strengthening and broadening the role of the United Nations in the solution not only of global problems, but also in the collective discussion of regional issues and for a more extensive use of the potential of the United Nations and its institutions in proposing and implementing foreign policy initiatives.

We see huge opportunities in the close cooperation of the United Nations and its specialized bodies in the implementation of the large-scale national projects. In this context we express our gratitude for the cooperation of the leadership of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCCP) and others. In cooperation with these agencies, the Government of Turkmenistan is carrying out a number of large projects of social and economic orientation that are producing specific results in the areas of health care, social affairs, education, environment and other areas.

More than a year has passed since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, which forced us to evaluate the issues of security of our people and our States through a qualitatively new scale of measurement and has confirmed the necessity to consolidate efforts in this direction.

In this context the region of Central Asia has come to the forefront of the world's attention. In many

respects the prospects for peace and security will depend on the way multilateral dialogue develops on these issues in the region.

Turkmenistan attaches foremost importance to the role of the United Nations in invigorating regional and interregional dialogue in the search for solutions to emerging problems. In this connection I would like to draw your attention to the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan in creating a regional consultative council of the heads of Government of the countries of Central Asia. This would be a high-level interstate body for regular consultations and the development of joint decisions on matters that touch directly upon the destinies of the States in the region and the real needs of their people.

Primarily, these issues would include trade and economic interaction, energy supply, cross-border trade, water use, transportation and humanitarian cooperation. We believe that multilateral consultations on the part of heads of State will contribute to the development and implementation of agreed actions by the parties, on the basis of mutual interests, and will enable the creation of a maximally effective system of rational interaction.

In this regard, the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Niyazov, to hold an international conference in Turkmenistan on economic cooperation in Central and South Asia, with the participation of representatives from the region, the United States, Russia, China, Japan, countries of the European Union, other interested States, and international financial and economic institutions, can be considered to be very timely.

Such a forum will promote a new system of economic ties between West and East based on joint and equal cooperation of States. Its main goal should be creation of the most favourable conditions for trade, investment activities, and the introduction of modern technology. Moreover, holding such an international conference will make it possible for developed countries to assess the real potential for industrial and social development of States in Central and South Asia.

The beginning of work on the trans-Afghan gas pipeline projects using the "Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan" route is of great importance in developing regional cooperation. The agreement for the construction of the new gas pipeline was signed in May of this year, in Islamabad, by the Presidents of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Turkmenistan welcomes the interest shown in this project by large companies, financial and industrial groups, and first of all by the Asian Development Bank, which is taking an active part in the negotiating process for the implementation of the trans-Afghan gas pipeline project.

The trans-Afghan gas pipeline is a project on an international scale that has colossal social, economic and political significance, primarily from the point of view of strengthening stability and security in the region. The trans-Afghan gas pipeline, of which more than 700 kilometres would be laid through Afghanistan, has, in addition to its economic component, an invaluable social and humanitarian significance. The construction of the gas pipeline would create jobs for more than 12 thousand Afghans and would also offer a new social infrastructure for Afghanistan.

In this connection we call on the United Nations to assist us in the effective implementation of this project. Turkmenistan had suggested earlier, from the same rostrum, the development and adoption, under the United Nations auspices, of an international convention on operating regimes and guarantees for interstate pipelines. Such an instrument would, in our view, allow us to create a reliable political and legal mechanism for providing the safe transportation of critical raw materials to world markets.

Turkmenistan's foreign policy of positive neutrality is aimed at ensuring secure development and cooperation aimed at social revival in the countries of the region. This entails the creation of new workplaces and fighting against poverty, in other words, everything that today embraces the human dimension.

Turkmenistan supports the conclusions reached at the recent Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. We feel that solutions to current world problems, especially in the humanitarian, social and environmental areas, will require a new approach to the human dimension in world politics.

In the 21st century, the notion of sustainable development has acquired a qualitatively new meaning based on steady and stable economic growth. On of the important aspects of sustainable development is maintaining a balance between, on one hand, industrial

and technological progress and, on the other, protection of the environment. The realization of this necessity is especially relevant today, when this balance is breached throughout the world.

The international community is striving to prevent negative, technology-generated consequences on the environment. A vivid example of that is the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Turkmenistan, having acceded to that important international instrument, is taking an active role in implementing its norms and principles, and is cooperating with international organizations.

In the 21st century, the problem connected with the huge deposits of hydrocarbon resources in the basin of the Caspian Sea, which involves not only the countries of the region but also many other countries and multinationals, has come to the attention of the world. It is now known that the deposits of oil and gas in the Caspian Sea are the most important energy resources of the 21st century. Their efficient development, along with the creation of the necessary pipeline infrastructure for bringing energy resources to the world markets, will ensure significant economic growth for many States and ensure the well-being of their people. It is obvious that many countries are interested in the security of the energy resources transit. The United Nations should play an important role in this process.

The first summit meeting of the Caspian littoral States in Ashgabat in April of this year, on the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan, could be considered as a qualitatively new stage in this process of agreeing on and developing a mutually acceptable solution to the Caspian problem. At this historic summit, Presidents expressed the will of their State and people, which is to ensure that the Caspian Sea be and remain a sea of friendship and peace. The result of the summit is that the Caspian theme was openly discussed for the first time at such a high level. Strong agreement was reached that problems are to be resolved peacefully and constructively. Thus, the first step towards a common goal — the determination of the status of the Caspian Sea — was made.

It is obvious today that effective cooperation and activities relating to the Caspian Sea as a whole are directly connected with ensuring stability in the Caspian region. Turkmenistan hopes that the Caspian region will achieve peace, stability and durable cooperation on the basis of justice and mutual respect.

We need collective efforts in order to solve the problems of the international community. The solution of these problems is possible, not through collective efforts alone, but also through the assumption by each member of the international community of its individual role and responsibilities. This is the logic guiding the political behaviour of Turkmenistan in its pursuit of the goals of strengthening peace and economic, social and cultural development. Our country is always ready for constructive partnership. The United Nations can rest assured in that respect.

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia) (*spoke in English*): My delegation has asked the floor in the exercise of the right of reply to the statement made earlier by the representative of Vanuatu. In this regard, it is for the benefit of that delegation, which, unlike the rest of the international community represented in this Assembly, seems to be particularly ill-informed or perhaps has chosen not to be informed. I would like to state that the status of Papua as an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia has long been settled through the mediation of the United Nations.

Indeed, it was within this very body, the General Assembly, that the settlement was agreed upon. In addition, I would like to draw your attention to the final communiqués of the two consecutive annual meetings of the Pacific Islands Forum — last year, in Nauru, and this year again in Fiji — which recognize Indonesia as the sovereign entity over the territory, and express support for the special autonomy introduced for the province.

Consequently, my delegation is left wondering how an active member of the Pacific Island Forum, such as Vanuatu, could make a statement that patently ignores these facts. By doing so, it has also cast aspersion on the wisdom and integrity, not only of the Pacific Island Forum, but also of this body.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey) (*spoke in English*): During his address to the general debate on 16 September, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the

Republic of Armenia, His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, announced that his country will continue to work for the recognition of the Armenian genocide, probably implying those who have fallen under conditions of civil strife, deprivation, havoc and unspeakable misery brought by the First World War.

We share a very long — almost one thousand years — of common history with the Armenians.

For more than 900 years, the Turks and other Muslim races of Anatolia have lived peacefully and side by side with Armenians in the towns and villages of Anatolia. The terrible events in question correspond only to a thin slice in that long continuum. The Turks and Armenians should not allow that slice, however accursed and infamous it may be, to obscure the inherent richness of their shared history. Nor should we allow that particular era to rob us of a better future.

Yet, Mr. Oskanian does not wish to see that this wartime tragedy engulfed Armenians and Turks alike; that an already unsustainable civil order was further worsened by outright rebellion conducted and promoted by armed Armenian gangs determined to ease the way for invading czarist Russian forces; and that Armenians were by no means the only victims of that tragic era.

Turkey does not wish to denigrate the suffering of the Armenians. Nor do we wish to belittle their feelings of loss. But in speaking of that era, one should not gloss over the fact that no less than 2 million Muslims perished under similar conditions under the same sun. This is not a chapter of history with which we can play the numbers game. Even one dead person is too many. Two is unbearable, whether they be Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Georgian or Circassian. All the peoples of the region had to go through enormous suffering. Thousands of Caucasian people were violently uprooted and had to flee the czarist army. We cannot and must not pick among the deaths. We must remember all of them.

The Turkish Government has made available thousands of documents relating to Ottoman Armenians dating back four centuries. The discourses and deliberations of the Ottoman Council of Ministers from 1914 to 1922 are among those documents. We invite Armenian scholars to go through those pages. Let me say this: to this day, the allegation that there was a premeditated, planned and duly executed scheme to annihilate the Ottoman Armenian population remains unsubstantiated.

The Republic of Armenia should have no part in this smear campaign propagating only one version of what took place in history. Sensible, impartial, dispassionate historians know that there are many sides to historical questions.

Turkey has never blamed the thousands of innocent Armenian individuals who perished in that era. But we blame the so-called nationalist revolutionaries, who expected that war would further their aims. The Armenians of today must see the direct responsibility of the senseless, militant and radical Armenian leadership of that day, who began the action. To forget what happened to the other is befitting only to a latter-day chauvinism.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.